

VZCZCXRO2132
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHNJ #0165/01 1091809
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 181809Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6165
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1674

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000165

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS
DEPT FOR AF/C, INR

E.O. 12958: 04/18/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)

SUBJECT: CHAD'S NEW PRIME MINISTER: MR. RECONCILIATION

CLASSIFIED BY DCM LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Youssef Saleh Abbas, Chad's new Prime Minister (and former International Visitor) sees himself as a patriot with a "visceral" attachment to national unity. He brings to the position experience in national reconciliation and credibility (as a former member of the MDJT rebel group) to reach out to armed rebels. Abbas's first public remarks struck the right notes: He described himself as having a mandate to implement the August 13 Accord internally, to reach out to the democratic opposition in forming a new government and to work for the reconciliation of the armed rebel groups outside Chad. Initial reactions among the diplomatic corps has been favorable, some of it enthusiastically so. EUFOR officers and UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Angelo joined in the general approval of his nomination. The first wave of popular reaction is also favorable, tempered by intense interest in the composition of his new cabinet - the first test of whether the President will let him operate autonomously and authoritatively. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Youssef Saleh Abbas was born in 1953 in Abeche in eastern Chad. He is Ouadaian - a geographic rather than ethnic label, and one which includes a wide range of groups, including arab-affiliated groups, but also non-arab ones. Importantly, missing opposition leader Ibni Oumar Saleh was Ouadaian and there is a significant Ouadaian contingent in the UFDD rebel group which the government has been hoping to peel off from the rebel mainstream UFDD.

¶3. (SBU) Youssef Saleh Abbas was part of the first generation of post-independence Chadian over-achievers who shone academically in a school system which still maintained European-level standards. Most in this group were rewarded with scholarships in the former Soviet Union. Abbas received a Masters Degree in International Law from the University of Moscow and started a PhD dissertation in Political Science at the University of Pau (France).

¶4. (C) After close to a decade in high ranking government positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the Presidency, Abbas came into his own as Vice-President of the 1993 National Conference - a national roundtable which presided over the drafting of the Constitution and seemingly put Chad on the path to democracy following the coup d'etat of Idriss Deby in 1990. In nominating him for an International Visitors Program in 1999 on "Democratic Decision-Making at the Federal State and Local Level in 1999," post's IV Selection Committee noted that in a country of many regional and religious cleavages, "Abbas was among the very few political leaders who retains the confidence of the majority of Chadians."

¶5. (C) In 2000 Abbas split with President Deby, left Chad and joined the rebel group MDJT as its political spokesman in Paris. In an interview published in "L'Observateur" at the time Abbas reiterated the leitmotifs of his political and intellectual career: a "visceral" attachment to the unity of Chad; the importance of ongoing national reconciliation; and defense of good governance. He accused President Deby of failure to respect the constitution, failure to ensure free and fair elections, and of leading the country down the path to disaster.

¶6. (C) Abbas broke with the MDJT in 2001 in favor of dialogue with the President's party and eventually returned to Chad. In March 2007 he was appointed the President's Advisor for International Relations. Prior to his nomination as Prime Minister, he also presided over CONAFIT - the GOC organization created to liaise between the European and UN forces (EUFOR/MINURCAT) which will provide security in eastern Chad.

¶7. (C) Abbas' appointment is generally seen as a positive move by President Deby. In his CONAFIT capacity Abbas has impressed European and UN authorities as a serious and responsible interlocutor. He has credibility with rebels and opposition leaders as one who has gone into "the maquis" and returned. His effectiveness during the National Conference and his outspoken defense of national unity gives confidence to many Chadians that he is able to transcend ethnic and regional differences. Initial reactions among the diplomatic corps has been favorable, some of it enthusiastically so. EUFOR officers and UN SRSG Angelo joined in the general approval of his nomination. Embassy has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with Abbas and has had frequent contacts with him over his

NDJAMENA 00000165 002 OF 002

varied career.

¶8. (C) Abbas's first public remarks struck the right notes: He described himself as having a mandate to implement the August 13 Accord internally, to reach out to the democratic opposition in forming a new government and to work for the reconciliation of the armed rebel groups outside Chad.

¶9. (C) The appointment of Abbas' cabinet is awaited with a great deal of interest. This is seen by many as the first test of his independence and autonomy. The fact that there has been a delay in the announcement is already taken as a positive sign that Abbas will approach this task deliberately and consultatively.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

NIGRO